

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the gentlewoman from California's (Ms. LEE) Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BEAUPREZ). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, we are here again this evening. As I am sure many of our colleagues are aware, during the course of the past 8 months, several of us have taken to the floor to discuss issues surrounding Iraq, Afghanistan, and other issues of concern related to the war on terror, particularly as it is focused in the Middle East.

I am joined tonight by two members of that group. We call ourselves the Iraq Watch, my colleague who is sitting to my right, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE); and I know that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) will soon join us.

Earlier today before the House Committee on International Relations, Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared and testified concerning the budget proposal put forth by the Department and by the administration for the coming year. The Secretary had to leave earlier than some of us would have hoped, but I commend him for bearing up, if you will, for some 3 hours before the House Committee on International Relations.

During the course of his testimony, he mentioned the tragedy that occurred in the town of Halabjah, a town he well knows because during the course of President Reagan's last 4 years he served in the capacity as the national security adviser and during the administration of George Herbert Walker Bush he served in the capacity of chief of staff of the Joint Chiefs. So he was very familiar, obviously; and many of us remember his service to the country during the Gulf War and prior to that what was occurring in the region.

If I had had an opportunity to question him, I was going to indicate to him that I have a profound concern about what we are currently doing in terms of establishing alliances and relationships with some extremely unsavory regimes that very well might come back to haunt us. Some can only be described as extremely harsh dictatorships with abysmal human rights records. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan come to mind immediately.

Now we have a base in Uzbekistan where last year the Department of

State used the following language in describing the abuse of human rights in that particular Nation. Let me quote, "The security services routinely torture, beat and otherwise mistreat detainees. They allegedly use suffocation, electric shock, rape and other sexual abuse." The list goes on and on and on.

Of course, the budget proposal put forth by the Department of State, under the leadership of Colin Powell, directs millions of dollars to Turkmenistan, whose leader has created a Stalinist personality cult that rivals anything we saw with Saddam Hussein. He even went so far as to rename the month of January after himself and the month of April after his mother.

I remember observing the interview between Mr. Russert and President Bush this past Sunday; and the President described, appropriately so, Saddam Hussein as a madman. I might have used a different word. He might be crazy but he is not stupid. I guess is what I would say; but the new President, if you will, of Turkmenistan, who has changed his name to Turkmenibashi certainly seems to fit that particular description, and Karimov in Uzbekistan is nothing more than a thug with ambitions for regional power, again, very similar to Saddam Hussein.

When the Secretary of State alluded to Halabjah, it provoked me to think that, are we repeating the same mistakes that we made in the 1980s when the United States Government supported Saddam Hussein? Let us remember, it was the United States Government that removed Saddam Hussein from the terrorist list. We now hear that he supported terrorist groups. He was doing that in the 1980s, but the Reagan-Bush administrations removed him from the terrorist list, but they did not stop there. They went further. They restored full diplomatic relations with Saddam Hussein. In fact, they provided him credits and loan guarantees and, in fact, provided him intelligence during the course of his war with Iran.

What I found particularly disturbing, and later when one of my colleagues speaks, I have a chart that shows just a minuscule number of transfers of dual-use technologies that were approved by the Reagan-Bush administration, the Reagan-Bush White Houses, if you will, that no doubt became the building blocks of the tools for Saddam Hussein to develop that nuclear program that was discovered in the aftermath of the Gulf War. I mean, it was those White Houses, those administrations, that allowed the transfer of those dual-use technologies.

Let me tell my colleagues where I received that information: not from a newspaper report, not from a think tank with a particular bias, but with an institution that everyone in this Chamber would acknowledge is free of bias, is what we all rely on to do our research, the Congressional Research Service.

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That particular report was authored and produced in June of 1992. But I guess what is particularly disturbing is when I hear the Secretary of State refer to Halabjah and say that we know he used chemical weapons against his own people. In this case, it was the Iraqi Kurds in the north who had aligned themselves with the Iranian forces with which Iraq was at war at the time.

The only action that I can discover in terms of my research was mild, off-the-record condemnations by the United States Government. And when this Congress back in 1988, 1989 and 1990 passed legislation, both branches independent of each other, that would have imposed sanctions on Saddam Hussein, it was the administration of George Herbert Walker Bush that blocked it. I agree obviously with the Secretary of State, he did use these weapons against his own people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND).

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, the fact is, at the time he used those weapons we were cooperating with him. The first Bush administration was cooperating with him. He was a part of our team, so to speak, because we felt it was best if Iraq would be able to prevail over Iran at the time. And then to think that, 10 or 12 years later, there is no evidence that I know of or that the administration has brought forth to show that Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons following that incident some 12 or so years ago. And then to come back after a decade and use that as an excuse to launch a preemptive war simply does not make sense.

When Saddam Hussein used these chemical weapons against his own people, our government was silent. We knew it was happening, and we were silent. And then for these self-righteous statements to be made a decade later does not make sense.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, not only were we silent, and it is very important that the historical record be revealed to the American people, and that is why we are tonight. If any viewer has any questions about the accuracy of what we state, I am sure that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) and any other member of Iraq Watch, we would be happy to respond and see that the reports, unbiased, that were authored back in 1992, would be provided to anyone who has an interest. They can contact our office.

But it was not just silence. It was absolutely, according to this report, action to block the imposition of sanctions at that point in time. I dare say what would have happened if in 1988 and 1989 and 1990 there were sanctions on Iraq, that would have been a message to Saddam Hussein. We can speculate that maybe we would have avoided the first Gulf War if we had taken on that thug then. But, no, we were not